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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
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SUBJECT: Primakov, Syria/China, Syria/Iran, Mousa, Lebanon,
Syria/Israel, Iraq, Palestinian Territories (9/11)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on July 11 featured a press conference on July 11 held by Yevgeny Primakov, Chairman of the Russian Chamber of Trade and Industry and former Russian Premier, at the headquarters of the Rossiiskaia Gazeta newspaper on July 10 emphasizing that it is impossible to achieve peace in the Middle East without Syria. Primakov said "Peace on the Syrian track means the restoration of the Occupied Syrian Golan to Syrian sovereignty."

He stressed the necessity of moving simultaneously to revive the peace tracks in the Middle East. Regarding the situation in Palestine, Primakov said that Israel and the United States want to deepen the conflict between Fatah and Hamas, stating that "it is dangerous to attempt to stifle and isolate Hamas." He added that deployment of international forces in Palestinian territories will not help stabilize the situation in Gaza. Primakov also stated that the role of the Quartet on the Middle East has been weakened, and that it adheres to the course of the United States, adding that Tony Blair won't be able to lead the Quartet, but will only carry out US plans in the region. As for the situation in Iraq, Primakov called for conducting dialogue with Syria and Iran to find a solution to the Iraqi situation. He pointed out that the American invasion of Iraq resulted in chaos and civil war and threatened to divide country, all while President George W. Bush keeps talking about a new strategy in Iraq instead of scheduling the withdrawal of US forces.

On Syrian-Chinese relations papers featured a statement by Premier of the Chinese State Council Wen Jiabao during his meeting Syrian Deputy Premier for Economic affairs Abdullah Dardari in Beijing on July 10 stressing his country's support to Syria's right to restore the occupied Syrian Golan. Jiabao expressed China's commitment to boost ties with Syria and develop them in all domains.

Leading articles, in government-owned Al-Thawra and Tishreen stress support for Arab League Secretary General Amr Musa's effort to achieve national reconciliation in Lebanon and they accuse the United States of working to foil this effort.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"Chairman of the Russian Chamber of Trade and Industry and former Russian Premier Yevgeny Primakov: No Peace in the Middle East without Syria. The Quartet implements US plans" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/11)

"China supports Syria's right to restore occupied Golan and is expresses concern about expanding cooperation with it" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/11)

"Lebanese condemnations of the roles played French and American ambassadors in Beirut continue. President Lahoud: National accord is the sole prelude to elect a president" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/11)

"French Foreign Ministry: Hizbollah is an important political power in Lebanon and a substantive element in the national dialogue" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/11)

"French Foreign Minister Kouchner endeavors to contain Sarkozy's anti-Hizbollah statements amid fears of aborting the Lebanese national dialogue. Hizbollah criticizes Sarkozy's inclination to please Israel. Nationalist factions reiterate the importance of France's neutrality" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 7/11)

"Abbas calls for deploying international forces to secure transport of aid to the West Bank. Hamas rejects the Palestinian Legislative Council's meeting and calls for opening the Rafah crossing" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 7/11)

"In the biggest US military show since the invasion of Iraq, the US aircraft carrier Enterprise heads to the Gulf to confront trouble-making countries" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 7/11)

"Mortar shells hammer the green Zone in Baghdad. Bush refused to withdraw US forces and acknowledges their difficult situation in Iraq" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/11)

"Democrats: Withdrawal from Iraq will take place prior to April 2008" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/11)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"When Will the War Erupt?"

Ibrahim Darraji, an editorialist in independent al-Watan, wrote (7/11): "There is a number of factors enhancing the idea of a possible war between Israel and Syria, such as Israel's desire to remove the disgrace of its successive defeats in Lebanon and to punish Syria for its support for the resistance movements in Palestine and Lebanon, and Washington's desire to take revenge against Damascus for its role in Iraq....

"But nevertheless the war will not take place because targeting Syria might set the region on fire on more than one front. Also, the Lebanon war last year showed Israel that war is no longer a picnic where it can show its muscles and arsenal and prevail with the least effort and losses....

"Israel certainly realizes that Syria, in the worst-case scenario, will not be less than Hizbollah in its resistance, steadfastness, and ability to drag Israel into an untraditional war inflicting on Israel the heaviest losses, especially since the missiles that pained Israel during the July aggression are abundantly available in Syria, with ranges allowing them to target the entire Israel from mobile and unconventional launchers, which makes it difficult to target and destroy them...."

"Facts that Cannot Be Distorted"

Umar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (7/11): "Syria has again welcomed the Arab League's efforts to find a compromise among the Lebanese parties. President Asad told Amr Musa that Syria supports his mission in Lebanon with a view toward achieving accord among the Lebanese and forming a national unity government to end the fabricated crisis and stop the deterioration this crisis is causing in Lebanon and its repercussions on the entire region....

"Syria has always supported every Arab effort to help Lebanon recover.... The experience of the past years has proven that Syria has always supported a united and healthy Lebanon within the Arab family. Syria spared no effort to help Lebanon and its fraternal people. It shared its daily bread with Lebanon at the hardest of times out of its belief that what pains Lebanon necessarily pains Syria and what makes Lebanon happy makes Syria happy. This is despite all the attempts by some tendentious people in the past two years to hide these facts and sabotage the relations between the two countries and peoples....

"Americans must stop adding fuel to the fire of sedition and dividing Arab brothers.... It is regrettable that some in Lebanon followed this American approach, which is supported by some Western countries, and began to spread lies and falsehoods and distort the facts about the Lebanese-Syrian relationship, so much so that some of them trust [US] Ambassador Feltman, abide by his instructions, and reject a sincere Arab effort to achieve reconciliation and bring life in Lebanon back to normal.

"This situation worries most of the Lebanese people and the Lebanese leaders who cherish Lebanon's national interest and Arab affiliation, which is documented in the Lebanese constitution. It also worries Syria and all Arabs because Lebanon was and still is part of the one Arab body, whether Bush's administration likes this

or not.

"Syria once again stresses its eagerness for the success of Musa's second mission in Lebanon, for the achievement of Lebanese national accord, and for the return of a healthy Lebanon to the Arab family on the basis of accord, a national unity government, and adherence to the Lebanese constitution."

"Way to Solution"

Abd-al-Fattah al-Awad, Chief Editor of government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (7/11): "Damascus believes Amr Musa has a chance to succeed in his Lebanese mission only if Feltman and other active ambassadors in Beirut stop putting spokes in wheels and heading off Musa's attempt by making statements aimed at imposing certain views and methods....

"Recent statements by US ambassador Feltman on Lebanese politics are part of the attempt to foil Arab efforts, which cannot succeed unless they evade and prevent the American-Israeli influence on the parties that adopt and undertake the American-Israeli plan in Lebanon....

"Musa certainly found full Syrian support for his Arab efforts to resolve the Lebanese crisis based on the formation of a national unity government.... Syria believes that Arab issues can be resolved within the Arab framework and away from foreign interference.... Syria repeatedly announced full support for Lebanese accord, as this reflects positively on the region...."

"Booby-trapping of the Palestinian Situation"

Ali Qasim, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (7/11): "Israel's decision to release 250 Fateh prisoners out of 11,000 Palestinian prisoners is meant to booby-trap the Palestinian situation and create tension among the various Palestinian forces.

"Israelis wager on Palestinian divisions to achieve what they failed to achieve through aggression, killing, incursion, and assassination.... Although the release of any Palestinian prisoner is a gain for the Palestinian cause, Palestinians must reject the Israeli step as incomplete and useless....

"Palestinians must return to the dialogue table to preserve national unity and not to be driven behind the wagers and assurances of the forces that wish the Palestinian tension will continue as this would only increase the suffering of the Palestinian people...."

Corbin